Design Sense

A newsletter on Packaging, Product Styling, Store Planning and Merchandising trends
Lippincott & Margulies, Inc., Industrial Designers, 430 Park Avenue, New York
November, 1956 Vol. 1, No. 5

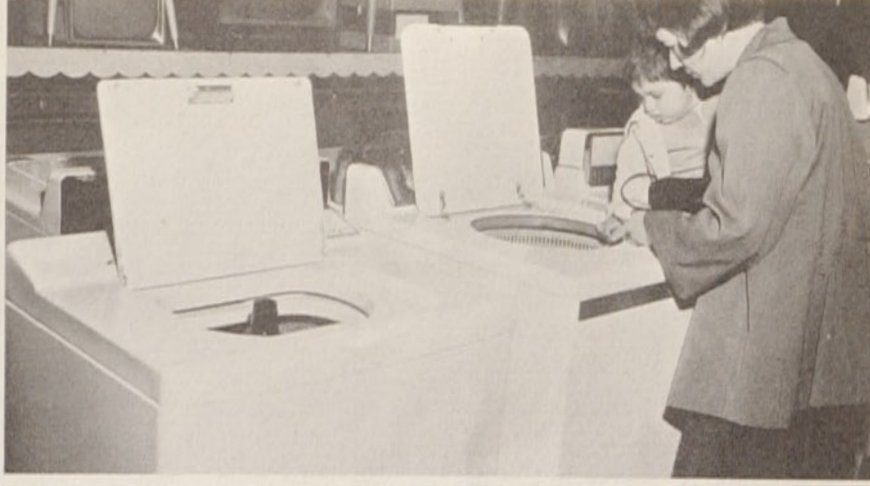
Nameplates mean more than you think in today's marketing

THE PORCELAIN JUNGLE

The number one appliance store in a small town must carry a great variety of lines to meet the many needs of its customers. But the consumer is likely to get lost in a maze of look-alikes with little to help her identify or recall product differences.

As we follow Mrs. Consumer through such a store in a town of about 17,000 population, we can see her problems in this porcelain jungle as she peers into washing machine tubs, studies the complicated panels of ranges, struggles down a long line of TV sets, and winds up puzzling a group of undifferentiated mixers.

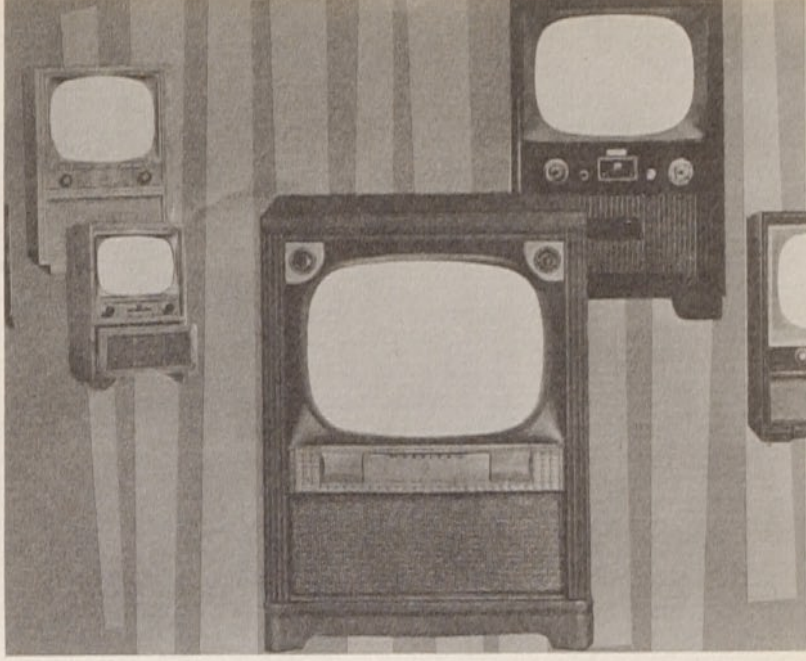
DEEPER...



DEEPER...

DEEPER...

Though it may be pleasant and easy in theory, there are few more difficult problems than to choose one product from among many equally suitable brands. The fact that the display technique of the appliance dealer or discount house adds to the confusion and that the products themselves are physically "look-alikes", all makes it more onerous for the prospective purchaser to choose any product, much less, yours. How then can you be sure your brand will win the shopper's favorable attention in a porcelain jungle?



HOW MUCH OF YOUR SALE RIDES ON YOUR NAME?

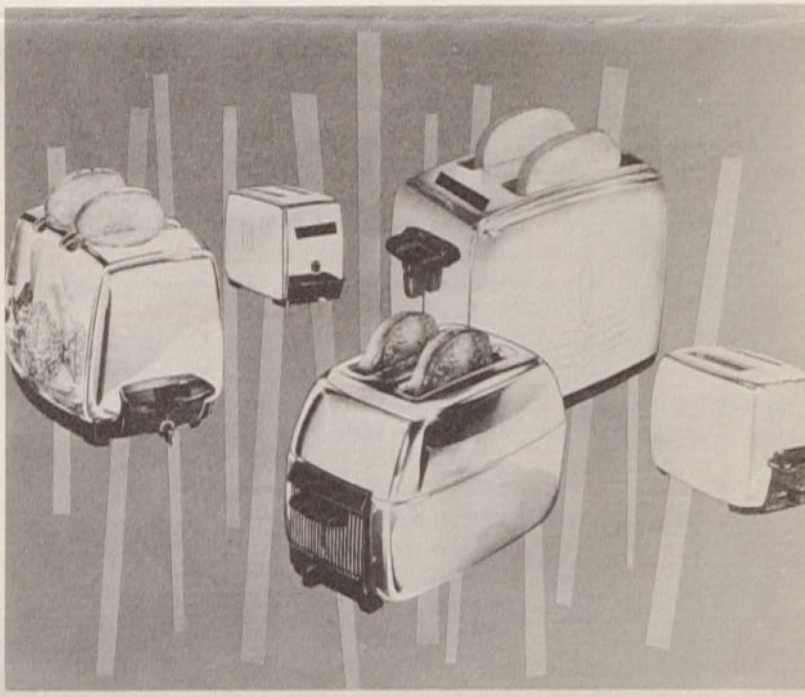
An appliance store in Union, New Jersey, collaborating with us in conducting a survey, advertised a contest for a week in two local newspapers. To the consumer who could name correctly the greatest number of 50 nationally advertised home appliances, a prize was offered. Nameplates and trade marks (exterior and interior) were taped over. Consumers could clearly see any other identifying features, including line names.

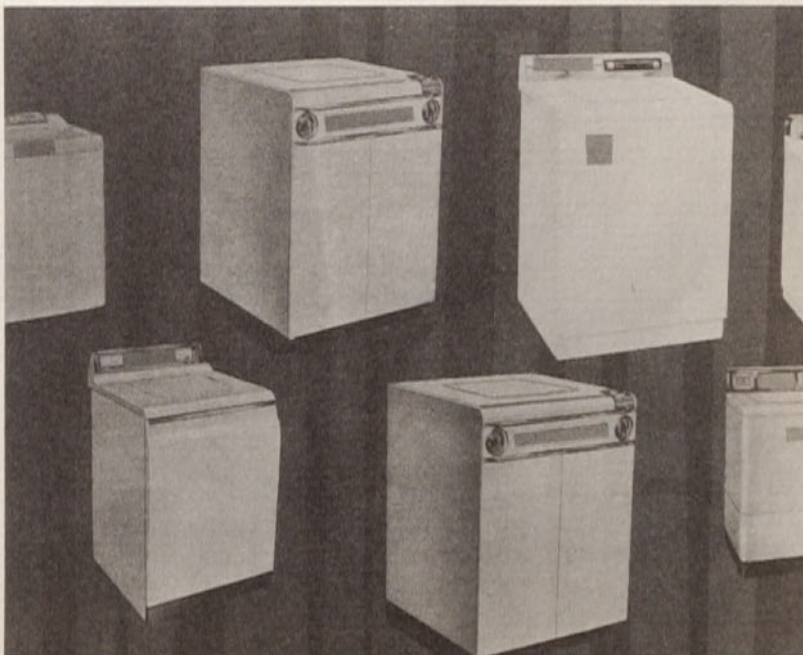
One woman scored 0%. One, who admitted she had been shopping for a new kitchen for the past six weeks, scored 75%. The average was 17%.

A similar survey was conducted in a discount house where a prize was offered to customers who could correctly identify one-third of the appliances on display. Of 187 people who tried the test in the store, no one won the prize.

We offer this information to support the statement that particularly in the present highly competitive market, the consumer may look at many products and yet see few. For the processes involved in seeing a particular product are complex. Seeing is not simply a matter of perception -- psychological evidence indicates that a good part of seeing is, in fact, memory.

Advertising, promotion, publicity all serve to provide the memory background which plays a part in the seeing process, but there must be a distinguishing design element that stimulates the memory response. Yet, let's face it, often it is so difficult to make similar products look different that the most distinguishing feature may be the nameplate.





Evidence of Manufacturer's Confidence

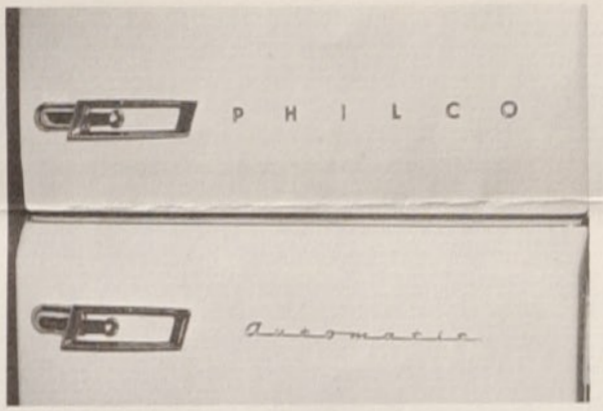
In the case of the major appliances, in particular, nameplates seem to have been designed with enthusiasm and flair. Often the nameplate is integrated with a functional unit, such as a timer or handle. Sometimes it is used as a part of the control panel, supplying an ornamental note. But however it is used, on the major appliances as well as on others, the nameplate can convey a sense of drama, of progress, of mastery over materials to the consumer. Through this medium with its gleaming gold, chrome and bright enamels, the manufacturer tells the consumer that he, too, considers this an important acquisition; that it is a product in which the best designs and the finest materials have been employed. The nameplate, with its brand name and symbol, is intended to transmit this.

If the brand name is carrying so heavy a share of the sales burden, then, we feel, the design of the brand mark (the way in which the name and other identifying visual devices of the company will appear on the product) becomes a vital aspect of any design program aimed at making a product the most appealing one to the buying public.

As we have seen, large appliance makers do give the brand name design prominence. (How well they follow through in advertising is another subject -- discussed on the following pages.) But there are many products on the market, outwardly indistinguishable from their competitors, that are not exploiting even this means of making an impression on the customer at the point of sale.

Producers of "look-alike" television sets, electric mixers, toasters, broilers and a host of other items, faced with the problem of developing personality for their products -- and their lines as a whole -- might well look into how well they are using the nameplate.

While consistently used as a signature, this nameplate may not be noticed by the shopping consumer because of the way it is embedded in the handle design.



Widely separated letters lose their effectiveness -- are harder to read and remember.

A masculine nameplate. For a product used by women, purchased by women, this nameplate, while consistently used, is much too masculine.

Does parent corporation -- RCA -- help this appliance maintain competitive position as well as individual symbol?

How it is, the world's greatest foodkeeper. Only the Fabulous Foodarama by Kelvinator puts such a panorama of foods at your fingertips.

THE NEW FABULOUS FOODARAMA BY KELVINATOR

166-pound Upright Freezer, and an 11 cubic foot Automatic Defrosting Refrigerator both in a cabinet only 47 inches wide!

Just reach for what you want—and there it is. Everything's up forward, right at your fingertips. There's absolutely nothing else like Fabulous Foodarama by Kelvinator. No matter what the size of your family, your kitchen, your budget, see this fabulous foodkeeper. It's priced far below a comparable refrigerator and separate upright freezer. It is also now available as a built-in. See it only at your Kelvinator Dealer, or write Kelvinator, Detroit 32, Mich. In Canada: Kelvinator of Canada, Ltd., Toronto 15, Ontario.

Only KELVINATOR gives you this frozen juice dispenser. Holds 21 cans.

Only KELVINATOR has an aerefrigerated Banana Box; a freezer wrap dispenser.

Only KELVINATOR has a roll-out fruit basket ...Twin Moisture Seal Crispers.

Only KELVINATOR gives you this Breakfast Bar for bacon, eggs, juices.

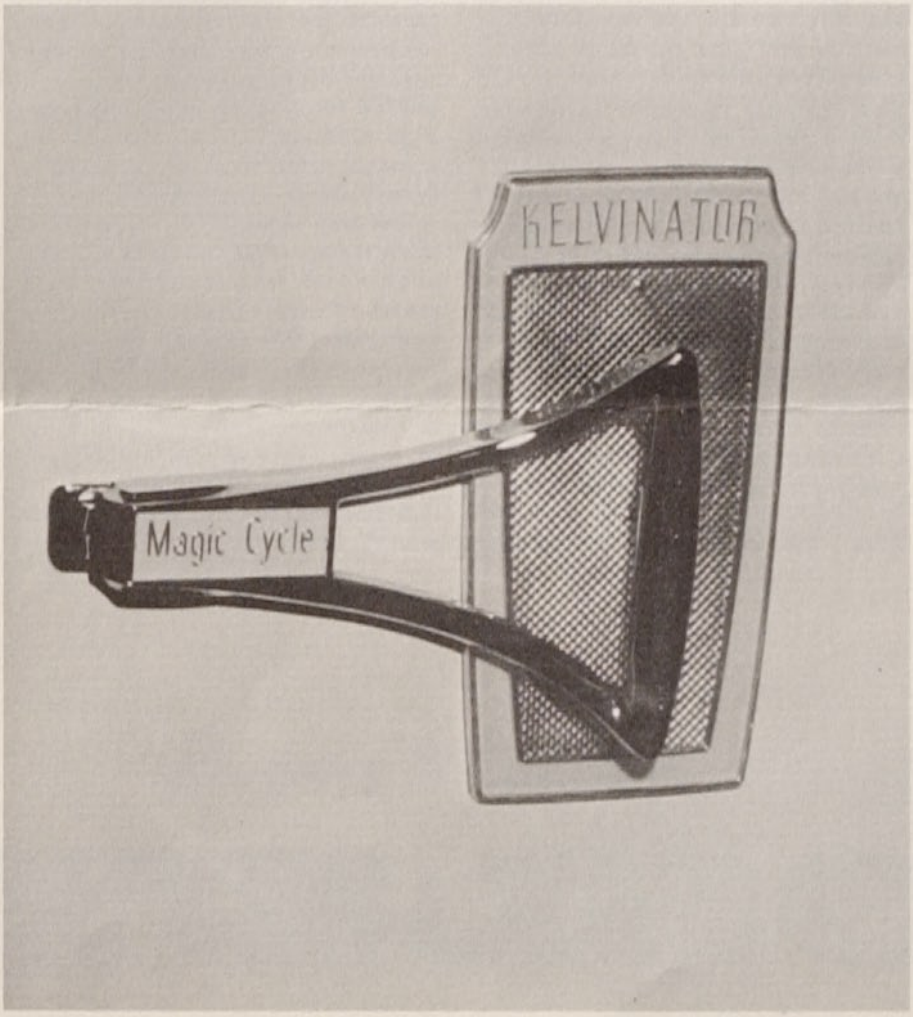
You'll find much of the magic—and many of the features—of Fabulous Foodarama in every new 1956 Kelvinator refrigerator . . . in a full range of sizes and prices.

Kelvinator

AMERICAN MOTORS MEANS MORE FOR AMERICANS

Space Savers! Foodarama is only 47 inches wide, this superb range only 30 inches wide. Together, they take about the same wall space you now use for your range and refrigerator, and you get the added conveniences of a complete upright home freezer. Kelvinator ranges, in both 30-inch and 40-inch models, give you disposable aluminum oven linings that end the messy job of oven cleaning!

Name is lost on the refrigerator -- is not consistent with ad logotype.



THE DILEMMA OF THE NEW LOOK

For the automobile industry, October and November are like spring for the butterfly. Emerging from the cocoon of secrecy will come a hundred or so untried new beauties, in new colors, new shapes, new sizes and with relatively unchanged innards.

Although the automobile industry is an outstanding example of the dilemma of the new look, it is not alone. The 1957 washing machines, vacuum cleaners, air-conditioners, TV sets will also make their early appearances in the coming months.

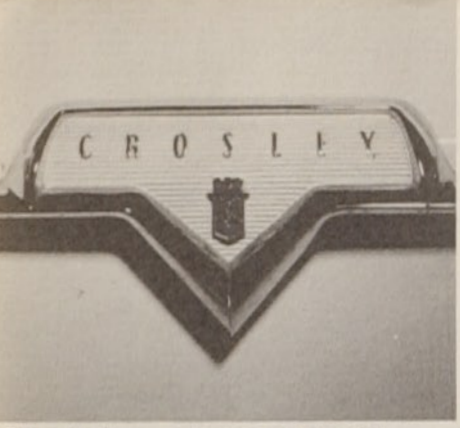
The caprices of fashion are not wayward enough to account for this vast annual turnover. It is true that in certain fields change is demanded by the consumer -- clothing, for example -- but in others the necessity is one which has been the product of industry's own making.

What is the dilemma?

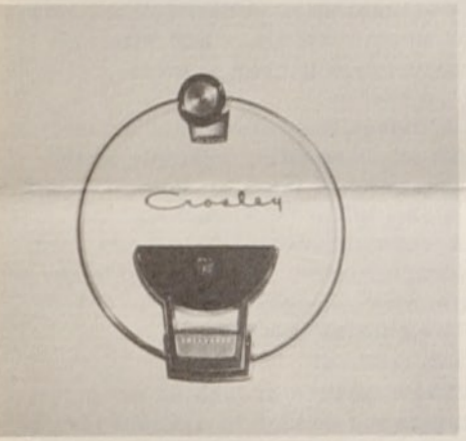
Simply, that consumer response is related to recognition, to familiarity. Furthermore, immediate recognition is more potent than a considered response. Each time product appearance is changed, then, the manufacturer risks losing the accumulated value of continuous advertising. He has to build a new reservoir of brand recognition and identification.

Here's the dilemma in a sentence: The value of immediate recognition is contrary to the need for changing the look of a product at relatively short intervals.

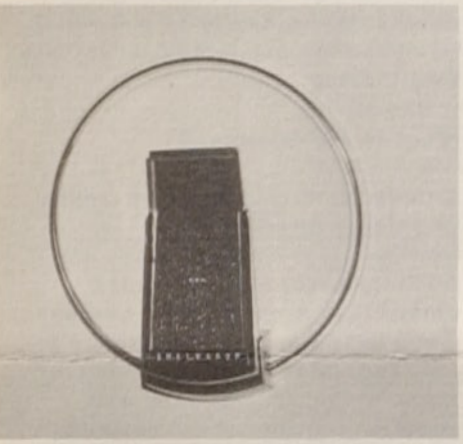
The dilemma is not insoluble. The nameplate, for example, still opens one way in which continuity and carryover or response can be maintained in the midst of the hullabaloo of change. (We will discuss other methods in future issues.)



This shield on washer, complete with elaborate crest, is a phenomenon in itself -- appears on no other Crosley products we could find.



Expressed in script, the name here is sandwiched in between various functional parts of the refrigerator.



Here's another Crosley with the name in a busy surround too, and all but disappearing, as it is engraved in onyx-like plastic.

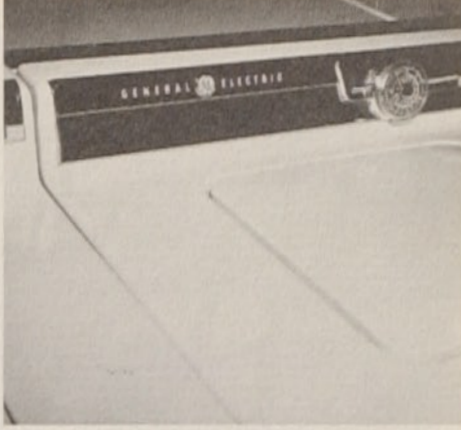
The Identifying Device

Although change is the burden of our civilization, industry has to some extent learned that continuity within change is important for products. Somehow, though, the idea of a symbol -- a nameplate, perhaps -- used continuously, has only reached part of the way through the marketing hierarchy. The result is often mass consumer confusion.

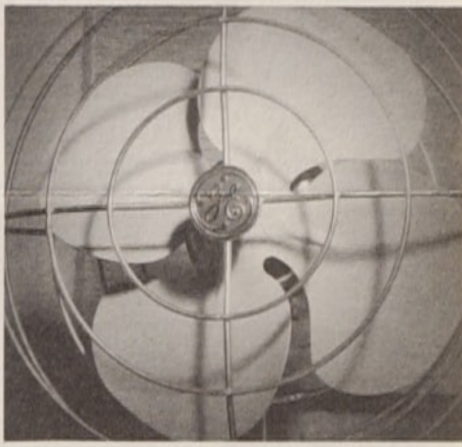
For example, we have collected here a group of nameplates from a number of well-known appliances. We matched them with advertisements from the same appliance manufacturers. Now, although the plates themselves are often distinctive and capable of being easily identified, only one of these advertisements uses the nameplate symbol or shape even in a minor fashion, and only a few use even the same logotype -- or product signature.

Thus, the major means of creating continual identification and familiarity is not employed in the most important of media. Even where it is employed, as for example in the Maytag washing machine, the name, while consistent, is scarcely an important part of the design. Many a product carrying a well-known name - Kelvinator, Thor, Frigidaire, to name a few we've noted -- does so in such a way that the shopper misses it completely. It is either buried too deeply in the other design elements, or is incised into a metal plate with no color differentiation. On those rare occasions when a nameplate has been thoughtfully designed, it is not given a real opportunity to make an impact because the customer's first acquaintance with it occurs in the buying arena. He has no memorable device impressed upon him before he comes to buy which can start the train of association that ends up with "I'll take that one."

CROSLEY



Unmistakably by G. E., name on this washe is clear.



Familiar G. E. brand mark is incorporated in fan design without being lost.

Small appliance carries nameplate identical to larger units.

Penny Wise and Sales Foolish

It's easy to throw together a few unrelated typefaces, colors and shapes, and then have it fabricated by the most inexpensive method and slapping it on the product, call it a nameplate. Such an uninspired activity is naturally enough, relegated to a member of the firm whose time is not particularly valuable. We have seen some examples of this on products which are among smaller appliances.

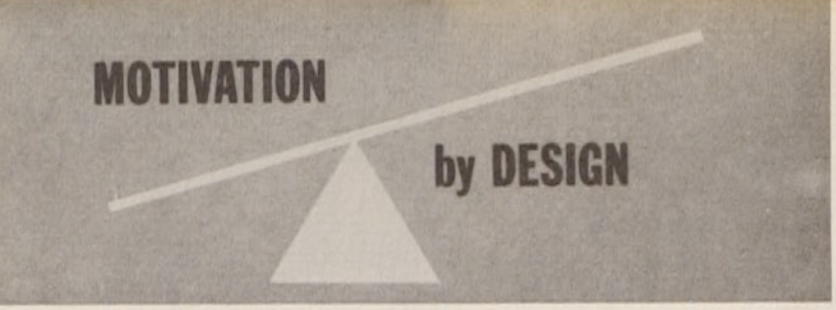
Yet the lack of attention to this important marketing device is often obvious to the consumer and can easily vitiate the effects of expensive production and promotion. For aside from the quite striking facts that we've already noted, promoting your nameplate can serve an additional function.

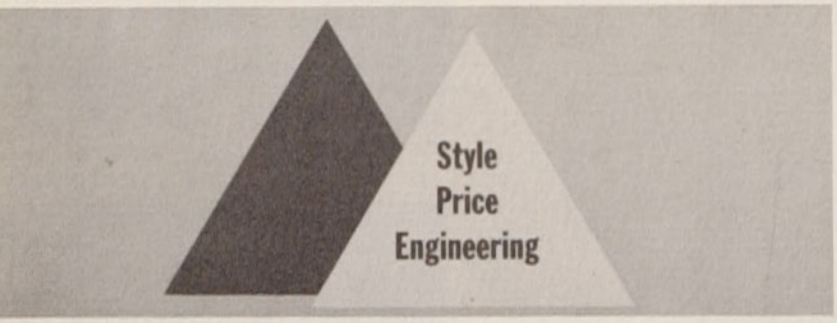
The consumer wants more than just an appliance when she purchases. It is almost a cliche to state that she seeks social status, individuality and many other gratifications. But the nameplate can help provide these. When she is familiar with your reputation for quality, the nameplate tells her that you are proud to have your mark on this product.

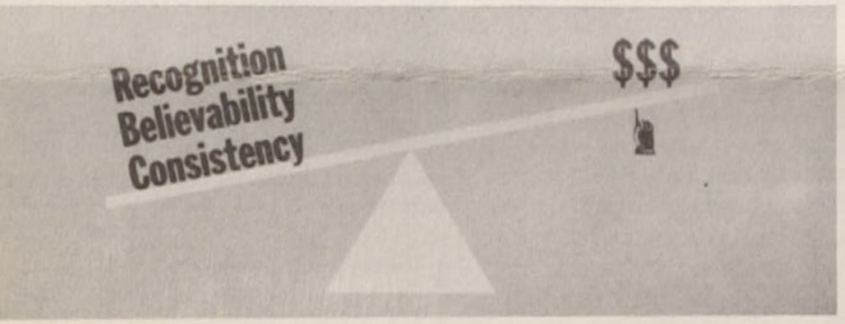
More, when you expend obvious effort to make the nameplate smart, attractive, easily readable and recognizable by her, you are giving the appliance dealer an additional post with which to build his corral for your product, particularly if you have used it consistently as a brand mark in all your sales efforts. He may lose your point-of-purchase materials, misplace your booklets, display your posters on your competitor's product. But on the selling floor your nameplate, standing out in the crowd, provides an immediate and permanent ad for your product, in the very situation where the product must sell itself most effectively.

Progress Is Our Most Important Product

GENERAL ELECTRIC







MOTIVATION BY DESIGN

New Color Film

"A product in today's market may be handsomely styled, competitively priced, brilliantly engineered -- and still not sell!" This is the challenge of Lippincott & Margulies' new color slide film on contemporary product development and design, which is being presented to various management groups and advertising agencies throughout the country.

The film puts the problem of marketing today's look-alike products under a strong light. How can consumers choose one appliance, or even one automobile, when they can hardly distinguish one from the other? How can manufacturers establish strong brand identity?

The chief solution the film presents is the development of a logical and unique product feature that will 1) permit distinctive visual expression, and 2) provide a sound motivational appeal.

Arrangements for a film showing can be made by writing to Lippincott & Margulies, 430 Park Avenue, New York 22, N. Y.

L&M

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